

20 June 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. COLBY

SUBJECT: Thoughts on O/NE's Role Summed Up

I have the impression that in our several talks of recent weeks I have not conveyed with sufficient clarity certain ideas about NIE production, policy support, and O/NE's role which I think it is in your interest to consider fully. Perhaps a summary statement in writing would help.

I. The concept under which O/NE was created is that it is the DCI's instrument for insuring that all views held in the Community on contentious issues get a fair hearing and lead to meaningful dissents if indicated. The Board is an adjudicating body vis-a-vis the USIB agencies, of which CIA is one.

The DCI's relations with USIB agencies, since they are not of a command nature, will never be easy; they must in some part be negotiated. If the DCI clearly says to his USIB colleagues that the mission he has assigned to the Board is to give all views a fair and objective hearing before he decides and issues an NIE, the Board can be a buffer to ease the DCI's relations with the Community.

An individual called a Special Assistant cannot do this with anything like the same effectiveness as a Board known to embody differing views and which puts out an NIE draft only after vigorous discussion and often tough criticism within the group. An individual responsible for "putting together" NIE drafts with the help of ad hoc

CIA teams will be seen as the DCI's man and will be identified with CIA; the other agencies regard CIA as one of the contenders in the action on a par with themselves and as sometimes hostile to their interests. The disappearance of the Board's honest broker role is virtually guaranteed to give the DCI trouble in his relations with the agencies. *

II. A scheme under which drafting of NIE's is farmed out to production offices or ad hoc groups will surely result in a decline in quality. The notion that an input can be received by a Special Assistant and "fixed up" by him or some editors attached to him is a sure recipe for shoddy work. Editing is not writing. In O/NE the latter involves devising a structured concept of the whole argument which is then reviewed and criticized by Board people and other analysts, and finally executed by a single hand with as much coherence, style, and polish as the drafter can command. We have abundant experience in O/NE with analysts recruited from other offices for tours with us. It takes the talented ones at least a year to learn the art of writing National Estimates and some never master it. Similarly, I suppose, some of our good people cannot do current intelligence writing well.

III. Within CIA, it is in the DCI's interest to have O/NE as a competitor to the large production offices because he will often profit from alternative views developed in a different environment. Big offices are hierarchical and the individual analyst feels himself overlaid by supervisors and editors. O/NE meetings on papers regularly bring together analysts from all over the Agency who find in such sessions a rare opportunity to vent their views freely and competitively.

* An elaboration of the way the Board can and has helped to buttress the DCI's reputation for fairness and therefore his credibility is contained in a piece by [] which I attach.

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I cannot emphasize too much the value of a small, independent unit like O/NE in which we can minimize the bureaucratic faldral which is the enemy of creative ingenuity. The atmosphere and working style we have managed to preserve encourages the free criticism and counter-criticism which can generate innovative ideas.

The interdisciplinary approach now in vogue, rightly I think, is also favored in a small unit. We have deliberately drawn our people from multiple disciplines; working together they can bring off a whole view of complicated subjects. This is scarcely possible in large units committed to one-dimensional approaches — political, economic, or military analysis as such — and in which individual specialties break down into small pieces. Both specialized experts and highly informed generalists are needed. O/NE is a forum in which confrontation between the two types takes place and can result in sophisticated products which are still comprehensible to our non-expert users.

IV. I am in full accord with your desire to get a better hold on policy support because I think such tasks have been sloppily handled; under present arrangements the DCI has no assurance that the best talents have been brought to bear in an orderly way.

There are two aspects to this matter. One has to do with internal arrangements to deliver policy support products. Here I have suggested that O/NE be given responsibility (normally lodged in a Board member) to assemble task groups in the Agency and to bring in the Community when indicated; or alternatively, that the organizing role be given to a small assistants group attached to the DCI who will insure that the Directorates and O/NE are involved in all substantial tasks of this kind. Either way would work and could be put into effect without delay or commotion.

A second aspect of policy support has to do with customer contacts which should help to insure relevance and responsiveness. Normally,

I prefer that customers be in direct contact with producer-analysts to avoid slippage and confusion, and we have done much of this in O/NE. But an argument can be made for a special set of customer's men touring around in almost daily contact with users, especially at NSC. What should not happen, however, is that these people move into producing themselves.

Your job description for the Special Assistants includes customer relations. But along with this activity they are also to direct production tasks (including NIE's) and to generate collection guidance. This is too much for one man; he will inevitably ask for a staff to help him; then his group will begin to supplant existing production elements and will do the job less well. One way to resolve this dilemma is to put your assistants specially responsible for customer relations in O/NE. There they could readily get support from existing staff, would have regular contact with analysts, and would profit from the stimulus of substantive debate.

V. Whenever reorganizing moves are made, even for positive reasons, there is a risk of losing assets and values built into existing structures which, after all, were created for good reasons. I have tried to convey some of the reasons why O/NE exists. It is a going concern, has no bad record (I would say a good one, given the difficulties of the mission) and has served DCI's well.

Your proposals involve going to a new system. Not only do I believe it is defective in concept and would not work well, but I can guarantee that in the transition there would be serious practical loss registered in decline in quality of performance. It can take years to create a smoothly functioning unit. DIA's creation of a new estimates shop several years ago is a case in point; improvement has been made, but slowly; and they had a sound idea going for them.

In sum, I am not saying that no changes should be made. I urge some. But I think a new DCI would be ill-advised to disassemble proved and effective units at the outset of his tenure, before he has had a chance to work with such units and to discover what their real strengths and weaknesses are, and what his own needs are.

My personal philosophy about organizations is that structures matter less than the people in them, and that the quality of performance is owing far more to the style and impact of leadership than to any particular set of organizational arrangements. I would judge from my conversations with Schlesinger that he agrees with this.

John Huizenga

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SUBJECT: The Role of ONE and its Product

The ONE product should be related to major foreign policy concerns of the US Government, either current or anticipated. To insure this relevance of the product it is, of course, necessary that appropriate links exist between the office and those concerned with policy in the operational sense at all levels -- the NSC, the NSC Staff, State, Defense (including ISA), Treasury, and the CIA/DDO. These links exist and are generally operative; no doubt they can be improved, but no major structural changes are necessary to accomplish this end.

While concentrating on the "policy relevance" of the ONE product it is desirable to keep in mind what is unique and most valuable about ONE. This is its role as the arbiter of community judgments. In this role, ONE has won for the DCI his reputation for fair-mindedness and integrity in the great struggles within successive administrations over the nature of the Soviet military threat (chances of war in the early 1950s, the bomber threat, the SS-9 controversy, ABM issues, Backfire, etc.). In these issues, it usually was special interest groups in the Pentagon whose ox was gored, but in the long history of

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calling shots as we have seen them, ONE has sometimes been forced by objective analysis to conclusions which have run counter to strongly held views in the White House, State, and, of course, the DDO.

Naturally the ONE product provokes a negative reaction when it seems to suggest that this or that course of action is ill-founded. ONE does not seem to be a member of the team; policy makers would prefer to have suggestions on how to make something work rather than an analysis suggesting it can't be done or that a totally different approach seems indicated.

But ONE should not be part of the team; if it becomes too closely enmeshed in the policy process, it runs the danger of becoming an advocate of trimming to fit the policy, and finally, of destroying the DCI's credibility as an objective advisor to the President and as a credible briefer of the Congress. These tendencies are inherent and inevitable in human affairs; it was in recognition of this fact that ONE was established in 1950 and provided with the autonomy under the DCI to perform its invaluable function.

It is highly doubtful that the ONE function could be performed effectively by dispersion of responsibility to individual special assistants, no matter how talented or respected. These individuals,

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lacking the limiting influence of a peer group within an office structure would tend to become victims of their personal biases and proclivities. While representing the DCI, they would still tend to lose authority in their dealings both within the Agency and among the other USIB departments.

ONE has always sought to provide intellectual leadership to the community, to detect and describe basic shifts and changes in the nature of the world situation as quickly as possible so that policy could be based on today's realities, not on yesterday's perceptions too long clung to as the truth. Often ONE receives no credit for its "discoveries" that the world has changed; the "news" is argued out in coordination, adopted as agreed text in an NIE, and through the invisible process of the penetration of ideas, it becomes a commonplace. But a history of the work of this office would show that any number of "ideas", great and small, vital to US policy and security, first found expression in ONE products. This function and this fruit cannot be "legislated" or "managed" into existence; it is the product of experienced, tested, analytical and objective minds set to work in an atmosphere conducive, not to ivory tower, academic reflection, but reflection in the midst of the real world, nourished by direct exposure to operational concerns, and free to make full inquiry into the nature of things.

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One minor and recent example may illustrate some of these points. It has to do with the consideration of Hanoi's intentions in the post January period when the communists were busily engaged in infiltrating manpower and weapons into South Vietnam in violation of the Paris Agreements. Those in the Agency most intimately involved with the "policy team" downtown and most directly affected by that team's concern with the flagrant violations of the Agreement were prone to play back the fears of an early resumption of hostilities and there was issued the "Warning Flag" memo of 27 March 1973. Others -- in ONE in particular -- with a somewhat more detached view could see that there were other explanations for the observed communist conduct and they felt that the near obsession with the danger of an early communist offensive served to "detract attention from a more likely and no less serious communist strategy". The idea that Hanoi is embarked on an effort to construct a viable administrative, political, and economic entity, separate from the GVN but based in South Vietnam is now commonplace and was recently described in some detail in a Saigon Appraisal of Situation dated 5 June. But this notion was first advanced in an informal memo originating in ONE on 29 March in reaction to the Warning Flag memo from SAVA. The ONE concept became the majority view of the Agency in the 12 May study of North Vietnamese Intentions prepared for Dr. Kissinger's briefing book as he set out to meet with Le Duc Tho.

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